

Davis Project for Peace:

## Conflict Prevention in the Kyrgyz-Tajik Border through the Public Awareness Raising on Cross-Border Rules and Regulations

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### Introduction

The Fergana Valley, situated in Central Asia, extends into three countries: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The valley's 60% territory lies in Uzbekistan, 25% in Tajikistan, and the remaining 15% in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>1</sup> The Fergana Valley has been identified as a potential area of conflict for these three countries since the breakup of the Soviet Union. The conflict and instability in the valley have been caused by multiple factors, such as geographic location, demographic factors, unfixed borders, and political and economic policies. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, partially demarcated borders, the establishment of border and customs checkpoints, as well as complex and ambiguous rules and regulations for crossing borders led to many disputes and limited people's free-movements across the borders. In order to contribute to the promotion of peace and conflict prevention in the Kyrgyz-Tajik border of the Fergana Valley, this project will focus on raising awareness of the local population on the rules and procedures of border-crossing. The knowledge on the cross-border rules and regulations will allow the local people to advocate for their human rights and facilitate the movement across the borders.

### Problem Statement

The analysis conducted by the *Fergana Valley Lawyers without Borders*<sup>2</sup> on the current situation of border crossing in the valley showed that significant conflict exists between border guard soldiers and local people. The lack of awareness of communities on border-crossing procedures creates serious obstacles for valley residents and frequently leads to illegal trade, using the workarounds or illegal border crossing points, paying bribes, and violations of their human rights (UNIFEM, 2005). The lack of knowledge on border-crossing significantly hinders the implementation of daily activities of the local population and negatively affects their socio-economic well-being, complicating their access to education, health care, and other social services. The situation has been aggravated by the complicated requirements for crossing borders and registering in the country of destination, along with numerous abuses by border and custom services. There are special set of agreements in force stipulating the rules and regulations of border-crossing for the neighboring people. However, the regulations are complex and not specific in their explanations of who can travel and where. In addition, the force-field analysis that we conducted with the help of our project partners verified that bordering communities of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan suffer from the difficulties associated with the cross-border movement, and therefore, they are willing to make a change in the existing state of affairs.

### Project Goal

The overall goal of the project is to empower the local population living in the Kyrgyz-Tajik border to advocate for their human rights through increasing their legal awareness on rules and regulations of border-crossing. To achieve this goal, a series of training sessions will be conducted in the border areas that focus on the issues of border crossing.

### Specific Objectives:

- To involve and motivate project target groups in the Kyrgyz- Tajik border to participate in the training sessions devoted to improving their knowledge of rules and regulations of border-crossing; and
- To educate target groups in the Kyrgyz- Tajik border about the rules and regulation of border crossing.

### Target Groups

The target groups of the project will be local neighboring communities in the Tajik-Kyrgyz border; that is neighboring regions of the Batken Province of Kyrgyzstan and Sughd Province of Tajikistan. Specifically, for the purpose of ensuring the project sustainability, the team will target formal and informal community leaders, including respectful, influential, and powerful members of the community, who will be able to transfer their knowledge and skills to other community members. For achieving project feasibility, taking into consideration available funds, the target groups will consist of total 60 people (30 persons from Tajik and 30 from Kyrgyz communities). The audience will include representatives from different levels: community activists, religious leaders, *aqsaqals* (elderly people/ advisors), local authorities, and interested community members.

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<sup>1</sup> Slim, R. (2002). Central Asia: The Fergana Valley in the Midst of a Host of Crises. *Searching for Peace in Central and South Asia*

<sup>2</sup> Fergana Valley Lawyers without Borders, Public Union (2006). Analytical report: monitoring the inter-governmental agreement on border-crossing signed by the countries of the Fergana Valley.

### **Project Partners and their Roles**

In order to effectively achieve and maximize the impact of the project goal and objectives, we conducted a force-field analysis to identify the key facilitating players for the project implementation. The main project implementing partner will be a local lawyer specialized in the area of conflict prevention, cross boundary communication, and migration. This lawyer will assist in determining training topics, developing the training materials and conduct training sessions for target groups. The project team will also involve local authorities of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan for mobilizing the target groups.

### **Description of the Activities and Timelines**

#### **Phase 1 (June, 2010 – Dec. 2010): Needs Assessment, Project Proposal Development, and Fundraising**

- This project has started in **June 2010**, as a part of the Advocacy class of the team from the Columbia University School of Social Work under the supervision of Markus Redding, a professor and a lawyer.
- The needs assessment of the situation in the Kyrgyz-Tajik cross-border area was conducted; potential project partners were identified.
- Project goals and specific objectives were determined and project proposal was developed.
- Preliminary project timelines were set.
- In Nov. and Dec. 2010, the team focused on searching for fundraising opportunities for project implementation, and worked on action plan.
- The team designed measurement of training effectiveness, pre-training and post-training survey tools.

#### **Phase 2 (March– May 2011): Project Preparation Period**

- The team will continue cultivating project partnership, and negotiate and finalize the necessary arrangements for the project implementation.
- The team and a lawyer will elaborate the training module on rules/regulations of Kyrgyz - Tajik border-crossing.

#### **Phase 3 (June– July 2011): Project Implementation Period**

- The team and local authorities will identify the exact training participants and set a date of organizing the training.
- The lawyer will conduct 3 training sessions separately for Kyrgyz and Tajik local population. Each training session will consist of 30 participants.
- The team will conduct Pre-Training Survey at the beginning of the training session;
- The training materials and booklets will be disseminated among the training participants to ensure project sustainability.

#### **Phase 4 (August 2011): Reporting Period**

- The lawyer will write and submit his analytical report on training sessions, including the evaluation of his own work and reaction of training participants.
- The team will evaluate the impact of the training through conducting the Post-Training Survey in the field and analyzing the findings.
- The team will organize a project follow-up meeting to discuss achievements and lessons learned.
- The team will write and submit final program and financial report to the International House.

### **Project Outcomes**

By the end of the project we expect the following outcomes: a) awareness of the local cross border communities that have participated in the training session on rules and regulations of crossing the Kyrgyz-Tajik border will be strengthened; b) the capacity of the local population to cross the border without paying unofficial payment will be increased; c) the ability of people to cross the border with goods without having to pay prohibitive tariffs, taxes, duties and border charges will be increased. Addressing the problem at the community level will not solve all of the issues relating to border crossing. However, it will provide a positive model on conflict alleviation and increase awareness of border-crossing rules at the grassroots level. These actions will demonstrate that crossing borders is possible if the rules and regulations are followed in proper ways by local people and border guard soldiers. We expect that this project will greatly contribute to mitigating the tension between the border soldiers and local population, facilitating movement across the borders, social stability, and security on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border.